

# JANES ISLAND WATER TRAILS

Explore the Marshes of the Eastern Shore

Whether you are looking for a few hours of tranquil paddling, a day-long expedition or a longer overnight experience, you can find it at Janes Island State Park. The park has over 30 miles of water trails that wind through and around the 2,900 acre salt marsh island. Visitors can take part in a variety of recreational activities or simply enjoy the panoramic vistas across shallow bays, marshes and low vegetation that provide a sense of space and solitude.



A scenic view from the Janes Island marina.

The water trails at Janes Island provide opportunities for a wide range of paddlers. Novice paddlers or those seeking a leisurely experience will enjoy exploring the Red, Yellow, Blue and Black trails through the marsh. These marsh routes are sheltered from extreme winds and currents. More experienced paddlers can take on the challenges of open water and longer distances offered by the Brown and Green trails.

## Park Information

### RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to paddling, there are a host of other recreational opportunities that visitors can experience at Janes Island.

**Fishing and Crabbing** – Anglers can fish for striped bass, sea trout, spot, croaker, flounder and bluefish in Tangier Sound and the Big and Little Annemessex rivers. A Chesapeake Bay Sportfishing License is required for those age 16 and older. An accessible fish-cleaning table is conveniently located at the marina.

**Day-use and Swimming** – The park's playground area features swings, a ball field and volleyball court. The beaches at Janes Island are accessible only by boat. There are no lifeguards on duty, so swim at your own risk.

**Wildlife Viewing** – The island provides an ideal environment for viewing birds and other animal species. A birdwatcher's checklist is available at the park store and a 24-foot-high observation platform is located adjacent to the nature center.

**Hunting** – Waterfowl hunting is permitted on Janes Island during certain seasons. For more information on seasons and regulations, contact the park.

### PARK AMENITIES

**Camping, Cabins and the Conference Center** – The mainland park offers over 103 campsites. Forty-eight of these are equipped with electrical hookups to accommodate tent or vehicle campers. Four full-service waterfront cabins (which sleep six people) and five waterfront camper cabins (which sleep four people) are available. A 16-bed conference center is available for day or overnight use or on a weekly basis. The campground and camper cabins are open from May until the end of October. The full-service cabins and lodge are open year-round.



Waterfront cabins are available for rent.



The park has two large picnic pavilions.

with tables and charcoal grills is available at no charge. Two large picnic pavilions, with a capacity of 120 persons each, are available for rent.

**Nature Center and Park Store** – Stop at the nature center to learn about the rich human and natural history of the park and area. The park store is adjacent to the nature center and sells camping and fishing supplies, park maps and other items.

**Marina and Rentals** – The park has a boat ramp, a soft launch and a 25-slip marina. Canoes and kayaks can be rented from the park store during the camping season. The park also has partnerships with guides and outfitters who provide complete equipment rental and/or guide services. Ask a park employee for more information.

### HISTORY

Paleo-Indians first settled the area around Janes Island approximately 13,000 years ago. At that time, sea level was 350 feet lower than it is today and mammoths, mastodons, horses and bison roamed across Somerset County, Maryland.

As the Tangier Sound was transformed from a freshwater river to an estuary rich in shellfish, prehistoric cultures occupied the landmass that would become Janes Island. Historic artifacts found along the shoreline of the island provide evidence of primitive man's activities, from hunting mammals to shucking oysters. In a sense, native people living on Janes Island were practicing a lifestyle very similar to that of the modern watermen surviving off the bounty of the Chesapeake Bay.

### THE BEACH AND MUDFLATS

Janes Island has extensive stretches of sandy beach along its northern, western and southern areas. The interior of the island is composed mostly of mudflats. Both of these environments provide habitat for a variety of creatures, including tiger beetles, periwinkles, marsh crabs, blue crabs, fiddler crabs and soft shell clams.

**Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela dorsalis*)** – Tiger beetles are a family of insects that are voracious predators, capturing other invertebrates in a tiger-like manner. The northeastern beach tiger beetle has a mostly sand-colored body, with a shiny, bronze or greenish head and chest. It has white or light tan wing covers, often marked with fine, dark lines. It grows to less than 1 inch in length. The beetle is now only found in a few small, isolated colonies around the Chesapeake Bay, including the sandy beaches of Janes Island. The tiger beetle is an endangered species under the Maryland Endangered Species Act. Federal law also protects the beetle as a "threatened" species. Therefore, collection or harassment of the beetle is forbidden.



Northeastern beach tiger beetle

**Blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*)** – This crab's Latin name means 'beautiful, savory swimmer'. It is perhaps the most sought-after shellfish in the Mid-Atlantic region and is caught both commercially and recreationally in Somerset County. Blue crabs not only comprise the most valuable fishery in the Chesapeake Bay, they are also major predators of benthic communities and prey for many other fish species.



Fiddler crab

where they create a honeycomb of canals and tunnels. Male fiddler crabs have one oversized claw, which they use in courtship displays and to threaten other crabs competing for territory.

### Life in the Marsh

### MARSH GRASSES

The marshes of Janes Island are dominated by two species of grass: saltmarsh cordgrass and saltmeadow hay. Other grasses in the marsh are cattails, phragmites and black needlerush, which dominate the northern reaches of the island.



Marsh grasses

**Saltmarsh cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*)** – This grass grows 2-6 feet high along the sides of marsh creeks and in areas flooded by tides. Cordgrasses are able to survive in areas flooded by saltwater because of the regulatory system they have developed that excretes unneeded salt on the leaf edges. The root system of saltmarsh cordgrass helps stabilize the marsh mud.

**Black needlerush (*Juncus roemerianus*)** – This leafless rush is easily recognizable by its characteristic grayish-green to blackish hues. Its stem tips are very sharp and stout and can reach up to five feet tall. The grass can survive in a wide range of salinity levels, from coastal to brackish tidal marshes.

### WINGED RESIDENTS

Between mid-October and mid-March, waterfowl such as Canada geese, whistling swan, mallard, oldsquaw, common goldeneye and bufflehead winter at Janes Island. Waterfowl less common around the bay, but plentiful at Janes Island, are canvasback and black duck. Although most waterfowl migrate north in spring, some remain through the summer. These include Canada geese and mallards, which use the protected marshes to raise their young.

Shore and marsh birds, including various ducks, the great blue herons, cattle egrets, snowy egrets and brown pelicans are year-round residents. These birds hunt for

minnows and small fish in the shallows at the island's edge. Ospreys, northern harriers and bald eagles are often present, along with several species of gulls, including laughing and Bonaparte varieties. A birdwatcher checklist is available at the park store to enhance your experience.



Cattle egret

from other ducks. In recent years their numbers have declined chiefly due to the draining of the large marshes they require to breed. The male has a very white body with a black chest and chestnut-red neck and head. The female has a grayish body and a sandy-brown head.

**Brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)** – The brown pelican is on the U.S. Endangered Species list even though populations along the U.S. Atlantic coast, Florida and Alabama are no longer considered endangered. Pelicans are sensitive to chemical pollutants absorbed from the fish they eat. The pelican is a very large bird. It has a dark-brown body and a long, flat bill. Adult pelicans have a whitish head and during breeding season they have dark-brown feathers on the back of their necks. Young pelicans have a dark-brown head and whitish bellies.



Brown pelican



### MAMMALS

Raccoons, otters, muskrats and white-tailed deer are some of the common mammals that inhabit the island. The marshes provide plentiful food and cover for these species. White-tailed deer can be seen swimming across the canal between the island and the mainland on a regular basis.



Raccoons and river otters

**River otter (*Lontra canadensis*)** The otter is an expert swimmer and diver. An otter swims at an average speed of seven miles per hour and can stay underwater for up to two minutes. River otters are most active from early evening through early morning and are known for their playfulness. They wrestle and chase each other, toss and dive for rocks and clamshells, and toy with live prey.

### Underwater Inhabitants

### FISH AND OTHER AQUATIC SPECIES

Native Americans first named the large body of water we now call the Chesapeake Bay, "Chesepiooc" or "Great Shellfish Bay," for its bountiful supply of crabs, oysters and clams. Home to more than 300 species of fish, the bay hosts 32 year-round species. Some species, including flounder, bluefish and menhaden, come to the bay in late spring and summer to feed. Other species, such as eel and shad, use the bay and its rivers to reproduce then return to the sea.



Oysters

**Oysters** are edible bivalve mollusks that live in marine or brackish habitats. Oysters help waterways by eating algae, filtering out particulates and excess nutrients and creating habitat for other organisms to thrive. Oyster reefs are one of the crucial components needed for Chesapeake Bay recovery. The Chesapeake Bay has lost more than 99 percent of its native oysters and continues to lose an estimated 2,600 acres of oyster habitat annually. Local, state and federal partners are addressing oyster restoration in a number of ways. Learn more at [oysterrecovery.org](http://oysterrecovery.org).



Striped bass

The striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*) is also known in the Chesapeake Bay as a "striper," "rockfish," "linesider," "roller," "squidhound" and "greenhead." It has been one of the most sought-after finfish in the bay since colonial times. The striped bass' appearance varies and it can appear to be bright green olive, steel blue, brown or black. They earn their name from the seven or eight continuous stripes that mark their silvery sides, extending from the gills to the tail.

The Atlantic croaker (*Micropogonias undulatus*), also known as a "hardhead," belongs to the family of fish that includes spot, black drum and red drum. Croakers earned their name due to the drumming sound they produce by vibrating their swim bladders with special muscles. Croakers are luminescent and appear pink when first removed from the water. They are one of the most abundant inshore fish species, although in recent years it is not as plentiful or widely distributed as its close cousin, the spot. There is speculation that very cold weather kills juveniles that enter the bay in the fall and winter, but the reduced population could also be due to an increasing number of fish that prey on croaker such as bluefish and striped bass.

Atlantic croaker

### Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics

Please practice the following stewardship principles of *Leave No Trace*:

#### 1) Plan ahead and prepare.

- Know your route and the limitations of yourself and your group.
- Carry the proper equipment and clothing.
- Notify someone of the time you intend to return.

#### 2) Stay in designated areas.

- Keep to designated trails and public areas.
- Keep groups small and avoid trampling plants.
- Protect wildlife and your food – store rations securely.
- Leave recreation areas and picnic sites cleaner than you found them.

#### 3) Properly dispose of all waste.

- Clean fish at designated areas.
- Pick up litter and dispose of all waste in proper receptacles.

#### 4) Leave what you find and be considerate of other visitors.

- Respect our natural and cultural heritage – leave all items as you found them.
- Keep noise to a minimum – enjoy the music of nature.
- Respect private property and the privacy of others.

For more information on Leave No Trace ethics visit their website at [lnt.org](http://lnt.org), call 1-800-332-4100 or contact your local resource managers for additional guidance.



leave no trace CENTER FOR OUTDOOR ETHICS

### Wildlife Viewing Ethics

**Act responsibly.** Stay clear of nests, dens and rookeries. Do not touch or feed wild animals. Do not allow pets to interfere with wild animals.

**Avoid getting too close.** View wild birds and other animals from an appropriate distance. If animals change their behavior, appear nervous, keep looking at you with head up and ears pointing toward you, or if the animal doesn't resume its normal activity, then you are too close.

**Make your observation brief, then move on.** If you are looking at baby birds in a nest or fish in a pond, remember that they can't leave and that you are interrupting normal behavior.

**Don't chase an animal.** Don't chase an animal trying to get a better glimpse or photo. Don't follow animals or behave in any way that might be seen as harassment. Don't allow your pets to do it either.

**Move quietly and slowly and use a blind if one has been provided.** Blinds, or hiding places for viewers, are sometimes built at popular viewing sites so that the movement of people does not distract the wildlife. Loud noises, sudden movements or an unannounced approach can startle and cause stress to animals.

**Do not use calls or whistles, or try to rouse animals in any way.** This can interrupt breeding cycles, drive birds from their territories, or make animals "call shy" so they don't respond to the real thing.

**Divide large groups of people into small groups.** Small groups of people are less disturbing, usually talk more quietly, and tend to act in a more responsible way than big groups do.



Great Blue heron



View wildlife responsibly.

### Paddling and Boating Safety Tips

The water trails at Janes Island have a variety of conditions depending on which route you take. The relative shelter of the trails through the marsh are well suited to novices. More experienced paddlers can follow the longer trails along the edge of the island or mix routes to create an adventure that lasts a few hours or all day. Be prepared before you get on the water and review these guidelines.

- Wear a properly-fitted, U.S. Coast Guard approved, lifejacket while on the water. (See [Maryland Boating Regulations](http://Maryland Boating Regulations) below)
- Boating safety increases with numbers. Boat with others, carry a spare paddle, and carry a signaling device such as a whistle, cell phone or mirror. Inform someone on land of your "float plan" if possible.



Boat with others and carry a spare paddle.

Know your route and any potential hazards along it. Review maps, tides and weather conditions before launching. Proceed with caution around obstacles such as fallen trees, debris, islands and rocks that you may encounter along the route.

Dress appropriately for the weather and water conditions in addition to air and water temperatures. Always wear protective footwear.

Carry a supply of food and water adequate for the length of your trip. Stay hydrated and protected from the sun year-round to minimize the danger of dehydration and heat exhaustion.

Never paddle farther from shore than you are prepared to swim, and stay at least 100 yards away from all moving vessels, piers and other restricted areas.

Do not stand up in your boat and avoid weight shifts that may cause you to capsize. Do not carry more weight or persons than your boat is designed to accommodate.

If your boat flips over, remain calm. Hold onto your paddle and the boat if possible. Try to reach a calm, shallow spot or the shoreline, then empty the boat and re-enter.

Be alert to possible weather changes. Thunderstorms can be common during the warm weather months and are usually accompanied by temperature drops, increased winds and dark clouds. Get off the water immediately if you see lightning.

For more information on paddling and boating safety visit [dnr.maryland.gov/nrp/Pages/BoatingSafety/home.aspx](http://dnr.maryland.gov/nrp/Pages/BoatingSafety/home.aspx)

### Maryland Boating and Fishing Regulations

**Personal Flotation Devices** – Boats propelled by oars or paddles are required to carry one PFD of either Type I, II, III, or V, for each person on board, regardless of length. All motorized craft 16 – 65 feet must carry a Type I, II, III, or V, for each person on board, plus one extra Type IV. Anyone under the age of 13, in a boat less than 21 feet in length, while underway, must wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket at all times. (MD state law).

**Boat Registration** – All boats, commercial or recreational, must be registered in Maryland if equipped with any kind of primary or auxiliary mechanical propulsion; and used in Maryland most in a calendar year. U.S. Coast Guard documented vessels using Maryland waters are NOT exempt from the vessel excise tax. When used principally in Maryland, documented vessels must display a documented use decal. For more information visit [dnr.maryland.gov/Boating/Pages/registration.aspx](http://dnr.maryland.gov/Boating/Pages/registration.aspx)

**Maryland Sport Fishing & Crabbing Licenses** – The State of Maryland offers tidal and non-tidal/freshwater fishing licenses. Individuals under the age of 16 are not required to obtain a license to sport fish/crab. They can, however, purchase a recreational crab license if they want to catch the bushel of crabs allowed with that license. All fishing licenses allow licensees to fish in the waters of Maryland from January 1 through December 31. For more information and fees visit [compass.dnr.maryland.gov/dnrcompassportal](http://compass.dnr.maryland.gov/dnrcompassportal)



Be sure to have a Maryland fishing license.

### For More Information

**Janes Island State Park**  
26280 Alfred J. Lawson Drive  
Crisfield, MD 21817  
phone: 410-968-1565; Toll free 1-877-620-8DNR (367)  
website: [dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/pages/eastern/janesisland.aspx](http://dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/pages/eastern/janesisland.aspx)  
e-mail: [park-janesisland.statetpark@maryland.gov](mailto:park-janesisland.statetpark@maryland.gov)



**Maryland Park Service General Information**  
1-800-830-3974  
TTY users call via the MD Relay.  
To make pavilion, cabin or camping reservations, call Park Reservations at 1-888-432-2267 or make your reservations on the web at [parkreservations.maryland.gov](http://parkreservations.maryland.gov)



**Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources Chesapeake and Coastal Service Public Access, Water Trails and Recreation Planning Program**



580 Taylor Avenue, Suite E-2, Annapolis, MD 21401  
DNR coordinates the creation of a statewide system of public water access sites and water trails. Website: [dnr.maryland.gov/boating/Pages/mdwatertrails.aspx](http://dnr.maryland.gov/boating/Pages/mdwatertrails.aspx)

### In Case of Emergency

In case of emergency, contact the Sheriff's Dept. Dispatch at (410) +911 and specify that you are in Somerset County, Maryland, or call the Maryland Natural Resource Police at 410-260-8888.

### Partnerships and Coordination

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Somerset County, Maryland

Explore the Marshes of the Eastern Shore

Produced by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources